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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION KUWAIT MAY 11-12: ABU GHRAIB ABUSE; IRAQ; IRANIAN-KUWAITI SHIA MEETINGS IN KUWAIT.

11. SUMMARY: Condemnation of the alleged abuse of Iraqi prisoners at Abu Ghraib continues to dominate local opinion pages. A small but consistent number of editorials also continue to appear, praising the transparency with which U.S. authorities are dealing with the issue, as in one column titled, "America, Be Proud of Your Democracy." All newspapers report this week that the Kuwait Ministry of Foreign Affairs called in the Iranian Charge d'Affaires to protest alleged meetings at the Iranian Embassy with Kuwaiti Shiites aiming to moderate differences among rival Kuwaiti Shia political groups. Commentators strongly condemn this "interference," with one calling for the expulsion of Iran's ambassador. END SUMMARY.

12. "America, Be Proud Of Your Democracy"

Mohammd Gharib Hatem wrote in independent Al-Watan (5/11): "It is the pinnacle of justice for the President of the United States to apologize for the abuse of Iraqi prisoners. It was also a crowning moment for democracy when the American Secretary of Defense testified before Congress, and when the CIA and others were held to account. American democracy knows no flattery. I wish our Arab leaders would seek such a civilized path, because in our Arab countries, thousands are killed for voicing an opinion."

13. "Bush Is Disgusted And Blair Is Shocked: What About You?"

Malallah Yousef Malallah wrote in independent Al-Qabas (5/11): "The horrifying and blatantly immoral pictures of abused Iraqi prisoners not only shocked the American president, who expressed his disgust, but also stunned PM Tony Blair, whose troops committed similar criminal acts. Regrettably, a few of our writers belittled the gravity of this case by approaching the issue superficially, and reporting that Saddam's brutality was no less than that of the American soldiers' in Iraq. Why try to justify such crimes? Even the American and British people do not accept such feeble justifications. Does your love for America and Britain blind you against condemning such crimes and abuse? Crime is crime and torture is torture wherever it occurs. All human beings must be respected, whether they are Muslims, Christians or Jews."

14. "Evasive Apology"

Dr. Yaser Al-Saleh wrote in independent Al-Rai Al-A'am (5/11): "What happened in Iraqi prisons was systematic abuse, adopted by the American administration, the Pentagon and the American military machine. This issue reveals the extent of the immoral foundations on which the American regime stands. The whole abuse issue would not have been exposed had it not been for the continuous internal political conflict, which in the past led the Republicans and the extreme right to expose Clinton's sexual relations. Now, the Liberals came out for revenge, and exposed the actions of the neoconservative figureheads in a bid to oust them from power. We would like to say to the figureheads of the American administration: Their evasive apology, baptized with the blood of innocent Iraqis, is not wanted."

15. "Iraq's Higher Clerical Authority Toward Muqtada Al-Sadr"

Salah Al Fadhl wrote in independent Al-Rai Al-A'am (5/12): "The problem with Al-Sadr is that he behaves as if he is the highest clerical authority in Iraq. However, he lacks the knowledge of how to make a decision by independent interpretation of the sources of the law, he lacks mature religious ideological debate and, on a personal level, he lacks charisma which can contribute to leadership qualities. In spite of media interest surrounding Al-Sadr, he is doomed to fail, because historically and spiritually, the Shiite mentality was and is linked to the highest clerical authority. This authority will take a negative stance toward Al-Sadr and therefore, he will lose the majority of peoples' support."

16. "What Does Kuwait Mean in Persian?"

Ibrahim Al-Duaij wrote in independent Al-Seyassah (5/11): "In whose interest was the dubious meeting which took place at the Iranian embassy between Khomeini's representative, a few former Kuwaiti MPs and members of Kuwait's so-called Hezbollah? Does Kuwait need advice from Iran in matters regarded as purely domestic? Our government did not deal firmly with this issue. many people denounced the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' timid statement criticizing the Iranian position. We call for the expulsion of the Iranian Ambassador and for severing diplomatic

ties with a country that still has imperial ambitions over the Gulf states."

17. "Loyalty to Kuwait"

Mohammed Ali Al-Naqqi wrote in independent Al-Seyassah (5/11): "News about a dubious meeting which took place between Shiite parties calling themselves the 'National Islamic Alliance,' and representatives of a neighboring country, is not a trivial matter. According to reports, similar meetings will continue for the purpose of strengthening and supporting this party in the upcoming parliamentary elections. As citizens we have every right to condemn the interference of neighboring countries and their diplomats in our domestic affairs. However, we have every confidence in our officials and their ability to resolve such issues."

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